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THE WHOLE FAMILY ENJOYED MAKING OVER OUR LIVING ROOM

A radio talk by Mrs. Margaret Hunter, farm woman, Melvin Village, New Hampshire, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, May 6, 1936, and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.

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My family and I live in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Our old New England house stands in the shadow of Bald Peak only a little way from the Great Stone Face made famous by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This colonial house of ours has been in the family for six generations; so you see it is very old.

We decided not long ago that the living room needed brightening up. The big fireplace on one side with its blazing apple logs furnished the inspiration which led us to this happy decision. Yes, we'd do the living room over.

"Does every member of every farm family enjoy doing over the living room?" This is a question I've been asking myself of late.

I answer myself by saying, "Probably not, because of course not every farm family tells the home-demonstration agent that plans are afoot for redecorating the living room." This is exactly what our family did, much to their own benefit. Our agent, Miss Alice Melendy, promptly called in Miss Ann Beggs, home-management specialist with our State Extension Service.

First of all Miss Beggs insisted on a family conclave to discover what each of the four members of the family would like to find in their living room. The list was long and varied but attractive to everyone of us.

Eight-year old Tom wanted a place near the open fire for his little couch with a shelf above it to hold his own special lamp. Ten-year-old Brad, who was just commencing to do home studies, did so hope that I would find desk space in the living room for my writing in order that he might have the flat top desk in the kitchen all for himself. Dad asked for a comfortable couch with his smoking outfit, magazines and lamp nearby. I hoped that my sewing chair might be near the table and in good daylight. We all agreed that it would be nice if the radio was near a chair where the dials might be reached without even having to raise one's arm. Plenty of space for books and as many chairs as possible for company, were other unanimous ideas.

It was agreed after some discussion that the walls should be painted, using an old stenciled border which had been found under the wall paper. Paint was mostly for my benefit because I do so hate to strip off wall paper. I also was allowed the privilege of deciding the color scheme for the room--in some families where there is a daughter, I can imagine she might enjoy this part of the undertaking.

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I was glad of the chance to use the color charts which we women of New Hampshire had prepared at one of our home demonstration meetings. The red-orange of the bricks in the fireplace was chosen as the central color, using a light shade of the same on the walls with one even lighter on the ceiling. For accent, the complimentary blue-green was chosen for some of the upholstered chairs, a lamp, a vase, in the pictures and in the rugs. Of course, I couldn't help making a color contrast with some of the other color combinations of red-orange in one corner or in a pillow.

The home-management specialist, Miss Beggs, took part in the conference by assuming that she might be a guest in our living room. Of course we were anxious that the guest should be pleased, too. She suggested that the room in general would be better balanced if the heavy bookcase were moved away from the heavy fireplace, that the floor and rugs be quite dark in color to hold up the rest of the room, that we remove the overhead light which was glaring, that the pictures used in the room should be of interest to anyone who might enter. With some effort we all finally decided that her suggestions were logical, although quite drastic in some instances.

At the close of the discussion it behooved Miss Beggs and ourselves to be certain that all the hopes of all the family were attained. After much juggling with paper and pencil we were able to find a place for every want, even though the room was far smaller than it should have been.

After these ideas had once been planted in the minds of four people, after plans were once written on paper and agreed upon, it was almost impossible not to see that they were completed. The urge was there and the anticipation of seeing some of our own ideas actually carried out made all of the physical discomfort during the process fade into the distance.

Five years have now passed since the living room was done over. Before long we shall have another conclave when I can imagine requests will be quite different. Longer couches and larger chairs for those longer legs on the boys will most certainly be expected. Other conferences for other families would bring forth quite different requests from ours, but if every member of every farm family has the chance to decide what shall be in the living room, they will be quite sure to enjoy doing it over.

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